

VZCZCXRO1217
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #5738/01 3120936
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 080936Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0574
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005738

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
NOFORN

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: PALACE INSIDER PROVIDES UPDATE ON ROYAL HEALTH
ISSUES

REF: A. BANGKOK 5718 (KING LEAVES HOSPITAL)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 5717 (PPP CONCERNS)

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Tej Bunnag, Deputy Principal Private Secretary of the King (strictly protect), told the Ambassador in a November 8 meeting at the Privy Council chambers that the King's health appeared reasonably good. The King wanted to remain active, although his health constraints complicated the duties of his schedulers. Tej asserted definitively that no planning was under way for the King's eventual death; the Privy Council would determine what to do after the event. Tej confirmed Princess Galyani's condition was poor, and he said the King was fully aware of this fact; her death, if prior to December 23, should not affect the upcoming election. Tej relayed the King's bluntly expressed decision that the Crown Prince represent him in the November 5 royal barge ceremony; this was taken as a strong indicator of the King's determination to have the Crown Prince retain his current status as the King's designated successor. Tej sought and received the Ambassador's assurance his remarks would be kept in the strictest confidence. End Summary.

KING'S HEALTH AND SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Tej Bunnag, Deputy Principal Private Secretary of the King (strictly protect), told the Ambassador that King Bhumibol, whose hospitalization ended on November 7 (ref A), appeared to be in relatively good condition. Responding to the Ambassador's questions, Tej said the King was able to speak and to stand on his own. (Note: November 7 television footage showed the King walking out of the hospital at a quick pace with the assistance of a walker; the King was not seen speaking in public, however. End note.) Tej said the King was resuming his regular duties, and approximately 80 files were awaiting the King's signature. If the King's health were to worsen, Tej said, the King would immediately return to the hospital.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Tej said the King had made it clear on more than one occasion that he wanted to leave the hospital, but his doctors held him back. Given the King's desires, Palace staff members were unable to clear the King's schedule; they had to cancel all events at the last possible moment. The

Ambassador noted the upcoming visit under Embassy auspices of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Some members of the King's musical entourage had indicated to Embassy officials that the King would like the band to come to the Palace for a private performance, with his possibly joining in a jam session. The Ambassador asked if these reports seemed credible. Tej replied this scenario sounded quite possible, although, like other events, a performance for or with the King could be canceled at the last moment. The Palace was continuing to plan for the King's participation in the full range of ceremonies and celebrations during the several days around his 80th birthday (December 5).

"THE CROWN PRINCE IS MY REPRESENTATIVE"

¶4. (S/NF) Tej explained that the King had very much wanted to participate in the November 5 royal barge procession. Given his medical condition, Palace figures prepared five alternatives for his consideration. When they presented these, however, the King quickly dismissed them. According to Tej, the King said, "I don't need these; the Crown Prince is my representative." (In the event, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn took the King's place on the Suphannahongse barge.) Tej said Palace insiders interpreted the King's blunt decision as the clearest indication yet of his determination to have the Crown Prince retain his current status as the King's designated successor.

PRINCESS' HEALTH

¶5. (S/NF) The Ambassador inquired about the health of

BANGKOK 00005738 002 OF 002

Princess Galyani Vadhana, the King's older sister, indicating some skepticism about official reports of her recovery (ref B). Tej reluctantly conceded in imprecise terms that the Princess was in a state of continual dependence on medical equipment. The Ambassador asked whether the King was "completely aware" of Galyani's condition. Tej replied unambiguously that the King was, noting the King had visited Galyani on a daily basis while in the hospital.

¶6. (S/NF) The Ambassador asked if Galyani's eventual demise would affect the upcoming election (as some fear -- ref B). Tej stated with conviction that it would not, noting as one important factor Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont's strong desire for the elections to take place as scheduled. The Ambassador observed that Thais should not need to choose between mourning the death of a respected figure and being able to elect a government; Tej agreed.

NO PLANNING FOR MOURNING

¶7. (S/NF) With due sensitivity to the issue, the Ambassador asked whether anyone was engaged in planning for funeral arrangements, in the event of the Princess' or King's passing. "Absolutely not," replied Tej, noting that this would be culturally taboo. The Ambassador asked whether Galyani's death would be marked by a 100-day mourning period; Tej said this scenario sounded plausible, but nothing had been determined. Tej also explained there would be no advance planning for how to respond to the King's death; the Privy Council would determine what to do after the event. The Ambassador noted the Embassy had heard speculation of a 1,000-day mourning period after the King's death. Tej said he simply did not know what would happen, but he was able to confirm that the Crown Prince, if he remains the designated successor, would immediately become King, although his coronation ceremony would take place after the mourning period and royal cremation.

STRICTLY PROTECT

18. (S/NF) At the conclusion of the meeting, Tej highlighted the extraordinary sensitivity of the matters they had discussed. He sought and received the Ambassador's assurance of complete confidentiality regarding his remarks.

COMMENT

19. (S/NF) Few contacts with Tej's level of access to Palace information have been as open with us as he was in this meeting. We see nothing incongruous about his claim that there is no ongoing planning for how to respond to the King's passing; we also take heart that the latest signs indicate no reason to believe this is imminent.

BOYCE